

March 11, 2009

TO: The Honorable Deborah Simpson, Senate Chair
The Honorable Dawn Hill, House Chair
and Members of the Government Oversight Committee Meeting

From: Beth Ashcroft, Director

Re: Food for Thought for Next Meeting's Work Plan Discussion

At the February 27th meeting, I reminded the GOC members present of earlier Committee discussions regarding whether there had been, or should be, something of a strategic approach that guided Committee decisions on the focus for OPEGA's work. I suggested that you may want to decide whether there is a particular strategy, approach or theme this Committee would like to pursue before making final decisions on the topics that should be on OPEGA's plan. The Chairs asked that I provide all of you with some advance thoughts on this to facilitate discussion at the next meeting, hence this memo.

From my standpoint, and in keeping with OPEGA's strategic plan, I am aiming to ensure that overall OPEGA is conducting work that is of value to the Legislature on topics that are of interest to the Legislature. OPEGA's mission is quite broad however, and what is of most value and interest to the Legislature obviously may change from session to session. It is the GOC that makes the determinations, on behalf of the rest of the Legislature, of where OPEGA's resources should best be applied at any juncture. Ideally, these decisions are driven by discussions of where OPEGA could add the most value for the Legislature given some of its unique characteristics and its statutory purpose.

As you consider whether there is a particular strategy you would like to see pursued during the 124th Legislature, here are some categories of value-added work OPEGA could do with regard to specific topics:

- evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency with which specific programs or activities are being implemented to help the Legislature make determinations about resource levels and continued need for, or design of, the program or activity;
- exploring areas of known, suspected or alleged problems to confirm their existence, determine the extent of the concern and consequences, determine root cause and make recommendations for improvements; and

- conducting targeted research or analysis to inform currently pending policy or budgetary decisions.

In addition, there is perhaps a role OPEGA could play, working in conjunction with the GOC, to help the Legislature get to a point where it has good information in the future for making policy and budgetary decisions on an on-going basis. For example, making sure there are good performance measures in place for programs, making sure we know what the programs and activities are and what is being spent on them. This would be a larger scale effort and part of it may involve making adjustments to the Government Evaluation Act, the budgetary process and the way State expenditures are accounted and reported on.

I look forward to the discussion on Friday.